

Statement of Service

The statement below will be included on the Age UK Lincoln & South Lincolnshire website I&A page. A notice showing the statement is pinned to the wall in all reception areas clearly stating that it is available as a printed or electronic document on request from an existing or potential client. A copy of this statement will also be issued to all clients receiving on-going casework support.

The statement is reviewed annually and updated if there are any changes to the nature of the service (e.g. a change to opening hours). Once updated the new version will replace the previous document:

- On the Age UK Lincoln & South Lincolnshire website
- In the customer information pack
- In the reception area of our premises

Information about Age UK Lincoln & South Lincolnshire Information & Advice Service

What services do we offer?

Age UK Lincoln & South Lincolnshire provides information and advice on a range of issues relating to older people and those who care for and support them. In particular we specialise in:

- welfare benefits advice for those over retirement age, including working out benefit entitlements and offering assistance to complete claim forms
- helping people identify the care and support they need, including help accessing Social Services and advice on how to pay for care and support
- advising on housing issues, including help with maintaining a property and advice on the different types of housing for older people who need more support or want to move nearer to family or friends
- advising on the services, support, groups, activities and concessions available locally
- advising those who are finding it hard to make ends meet or are struggling to pay their bills
- helping people to make complaints or challenge decisions about welfare benefits, social services, health services and energy providers.

Our service has achieved the national Advice Quality Standard and been assessed as meeting the benchmarks of the Age UK Information & Advice Quality Programme. This ensures we comply with recognised Advice Sector Standards of Practice and means our information and advice is accurate and high quality.

How do we provide help?

- **Information guides and factsheets.** These cover a wide range of subjects affecting older people and those who care for and support them.
- **Telephone advice.]** Call us on 0345 5564144 from Monday to Friday between 9am and 3pm. This call will be charged at a local rate. If you call outside of opening hours, or if our adviser is busy, your call will be diverted to Age UK's national Advice Line who will either help with your query or arrange for an adviser from Age UK Lincoln & South Lincolnshire to call you back.

- **Office appointments.** To arrange an appointment at our office you can drop in to our office or call our Information and Advice team, Monday to Friday 9am to 4pm on 0345 5564144. Arranging an appointment in advance lets us prepare for your visit and gives us an opportunity to tell you if there are any important documents we need you to bring along. Face to face visits are limited and must be made in advance. Full infection control measures are adhered to in our premises and we respectfully request that you adhere to our policies which will be explained at the point you arrange an appointment.
- **Home visits.** If it would be difficult for you to visit us, we will visit you at home for certain types of advice that can't be provided over the phone. This service is currently restricted and telephone or virtual appointments will be offered in the first instance. Where possible we visit people to complete welfare benefit application forms. However, home visits are expensive and time consuming so we will ask you about alternative ways we could help. If you would like to arrange a home visit, please contact our Information and Advice team, Monday to Friday 9am to 4pm on 0345 5564144. We often have a two to three week waiting list for home visits. When we visit we will always arrange the time with you in advance and our adviser will carry identification. If you have any concerns about someone turning up at your door who claims to be from Age UK Lincoln & South Lincolnshire, please ask them to remain outside and ring us on 0345 5564144. We will confirm if the person works or volunteers for Age UK Lincoln & South Lincolnshire and has an appointment with you.

What will happen if we can't provide the service you require?

Sometimes people come to us with problems that we do not have the expertise or knowledge to help with. We are unable to provide consumer debt advice, financial advice or immigration advice.

In these cases we can provide you with basic information and direct you to another organisation for further help. Where possible we will give you a selection of organisations to choose from and we will either signpost or refer you to them.

When signposting, we will give you the organisation's contact information so you can contact them yourself. When referring, we will contact the organisation on your behalf, arrange an appointment and provide them with copies of any documents already completed by our service. We will always ask for your permission before referring you to another organisation.

Sometimes when advising you we will reach a point where we don't have the expertise to pursue your case any further. This most commonly happens when there is a need to challenge a welfare benefit decision. We will refer you to another local advice service that can help you if this happens.

How our service treats its clients

We follow five key principles when delivering our service.

The service is provided free of charge.

You will not be charged for any of our information and advice. If we signpost or refer you onto another organisation we will tell you if there is any charge for their service. While we provide help free of charge, running the Information and Advice Service is expensive and does not attract external funding. Any donation you can make will be greatly appreciated. If you wish to donate please ask one of our staff or volunteers about Gift Aid.

The information and advice we provide is independent of any outside influence.

We will never recommend a service or provider to you, including Age UK's own services. Where possible we will always provide you with a choice of alternatives and help you make an informed decision. We are not bound by local or national government policies and will always advise you on what's best for you rather than what's best for the council, the Department for Work and Pensions, Age UK or any other organisation. We will never advise someone to do anything illegal or fraudulent. We will immediately stop advising anyone carrying out illegal or fraudulent actions and may notify the appropriate authorities.

All information is confidential.

Any information we keep about you is stored securely and only viewed by staff and volunteers involved in advising you or other people that you have consented to share this information with. These may be external auditors that check the quality and accuracy of our work, organisations we are referring your case on to and agencies we are dealing with on your behalf (such as the DWP or an energy supplier). We won't share your information or discuss your case with anyone outside of our service without your consent unless they have been given responsibility to act on your behalf by the Court of Protection or Department for Work and Pensions. You have the right to withdraw consent. To exercise any of your rights concerning your information, please send an email to the following address:

DPO@ageuklsl.org.uk or write to us at the following postal address:

Data Protection Officer
Age UK Lincoln & South Lincolnshire
36 Park Street
Lincoln
LN1 1UQ

We may share information about someone without their consent if:

- they insist on taking an illegal or fraudulent course of action
- we are contacted by a statutory body about a client who is being investigated for suspected illegal or fraudulent activity
- we are concerned that someone involved in a case is at risk of abuse or harm or there is a possibility of abuse or harm to others. In this case we may notify a relevant statutory body, for example social services or the police. These disclosures will be done following Adult Safeguarding' procedures that our staff and volunteers have been trained in.

Any data we hold about you is processed in accordance with data protection legislation and Age UK Lincoln & South Lincolnshire's Data Protection policy. A copy of our data protection policy is available at [Age UK Lincoln & South Lincolnshire | Privacy policy](#) or by calling 0345 5564144. To exercise any of your rights concerning your information, please send an email to the following address: DPO@ageuklsl.org.uk or write to us at the following postal address:

Data Protection Officer
Age UK Lincoln & South Lincolnshire
36 Park Street
Lincoln
LN1 1UQ

Clients are treated with fairness, dignity and respect and we expect clients to treat our staff and volunteers in the same way.

We won't judge anyone based on their age, disability, gender, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex or sexual orientation. We won't judge anyone based upon the circumstances they find themselves in and we won't try to influence the decisions you make following our advice. Sometimes clients will make a decision that we don't think is in their best interest. We will tell them if this happens and aim to provide enough information and advice to help them make an informed choice. We will respect whatever decision they then make. The Information & Advice Service operates in compliance with Age UK Lincoln & South Lincolnshire's Equality and Diversity Policy. A copy of the policy is available by request, please contact us on 0345 5564144 and we will post or email a copy to you.

Our service is as accessible as possible for older people.

Our offices are suitable for people with disabilities with ground floor interview facilities and toilets. Where clients have difficulties accessing or understanding our information and advice, for example because of a disability or language issue, we will take all reasonable steps to provide our service in a manner that is accessible and appropriate to their needs or circumstances and we will always aim to give you as much time as you need when we see you. The Information & Advice Service operates in compliance with Age UK Lincoln & South Lincolnshire's Equality and Diversity Policy. A copy of the policy is available by request, please call us on 0345 5564144 and we will post or email a copy to you.

How to make a complaint, compliment or suggestion about our service

If you would like to compliment or make a suggestion about our Information & Advice service please contact the service manager Diane Moon, either in writing at 36 Park Street, Lincoln, LN1 1UQ, or at diane.moon@ageuklsl.org.uk, or by telephone on 03455564144.

If you wish to make a complaint, please follow Age UK Lincoln & South Lincolnshire's complaints procedure. A copy of the full complaint procedure is available by request, please call us on 0345 5564144.

What we ask of our clients

In return for providing information & advice we expect you to:

- treat our staff and other clients with courtesy and respect
- provide us with accurate and truthful information about your circumstances
- attend appointments or let us know in advance if you can't, if possible
- inform us of changes in your circumstances which may be relevant to your case
- provide us with information or paperwork that we need for your case
- notify us of the outcome of welfare benefit applications we have assisted you with

How you can help us

Our Information & Advice Team gain satisfaction from our work and the positive impact we have on our clients. We don't expect any further form of recognition or gifts. There are a number of other ways you can support us so we can continue to provide the service.



- Make a donation – Please contact us on 0345 5564144 or write to Diane Moon at 36 Park Street, Lincoln, LN1 1UQ. Please make it clear when you make your donation if you wish to donate specifically to the Information & Advice service. And if you are a tax payer please ask us about 'gift aid'.
- Provide a case study of your experience of our Information & Advice service and the difference it has made to you – Please contact us on: 0345 5564144 or write to Diane Moon at 36 Park Street, Lincoln, LN1 1UQ.
- Campaign for us by writing to your councillor or MP to tell them how helpful you found us. From time to time we run local and national campaigns. If you would like to support us in our campaigning work contact the marketing team on 0345 5564144.
- Donate to, or buy from, our charity shop(s) – 36 Strait Bargate, Boston, PE21 6LJ
- Join in with our activities. Age UK Lincoln & South Lincolnshire provides a range of activities for older people. Please visit our website at:
<https://www.ageuk.org.uk/lincolnsouthlincolnshire/>
- Tell others about our service and recommend us to your friends.